

VICTOR J. PAPA
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NEW YORK, NY 10038

April 27, 2016

The Honorable Valerie E. Caproni
United States District Judge
Southern District of New York
40 Foley Square
New York, New York 10007

Re: Sheldon Silver

Dear Judge Caproni:

I have been a community worker on the Lower East Side for more than 40 years. Prior to my current position as President of Two Bridges Neighborhood Council, I served as Executive Director of Immigrant Social Services, Inc. and as Director of the Lower East Side Catholic Area Conference. I also served in a voluntary capacity as a board member of the 1650 unit cooperative Southbridge Towers, Inc., 7 of those years as its president, and I currently serve as a Vice President of Hamilton-Madison Settlement House. All of these organizations are on the Lower East Side and within the Assembly district Mr. Silver represented; most of them center on human services for those in need. As well, in all of these roles I had the opportunity to interact with Assemblyman Silver personally and with his staff regarding a myriad number of issues that would emerge from the varying roles I was serving at the time. These were mostly about tenant advocacy issues, or issues affecting affordable housing –the loss or the lack thereof in our Lower East Side neighborhoods. Mr. Silver was known to be a valuable supporter of policies and laws that preserved and/or fostered the construction of needed affordable housing. There were other issues about which his assistance was sought, but interacting with him and his staff over 40 years are just too numerous to mention. Suffice to say that they all received a fair hearing, and on many occasions resulted in successful outcomes because of Mr. Silver's personal involvement and empathy for the issue. Some issues he and I simply did not agree and these had no detrimental effect to our long, long relationship.

I am aware of Mr. Silver's conviction and lament the whole affair, especially since it tarnishes what would have otherwise been a stupendous model for the people of our district of a pristine tenure of leadership. I am not alone in that sentiment. I share with others the painful awareness of the implications of this matter on the person, but also share among many the great conflicted feelings about a person we grew to know affectionately and to greatly appreciate for his readiness to listen and help. I guess we always felt confidence in our work of serving critical human needs in our community knowing that Assemblyman Silver would ultimately assist as a reliable back-up in some of the most difficult cases. Some of us are now completely lost. In one particular critical matter facing the fate of a local settlement house, Mr. Silver personally stepped in and arranged access to government agency officials to resolve the problems. This is the level of responsiveness expected of elected officials, but Mr. Silver, especially regarding some very critical issues affecting low-income families or individuals, went well beyond that level. He helped many and I only hope many can help him at this point.

I would also mention that, some years back I was the proud presenter on behalf of Hamilton-Madison House of a special distinction bestowed on Mr. Silver. It was not for any particular reason owing to Hamilton-Madison House, but rather, as I recall, the natural obligation of the agency to acknowledge his good, which was spread far and wide in our community. The bestowal of this honor by the agency upon Mr. Silver was felt as a matter of due diligence in recognition for all he did on behalf of the all the settlement house agencies on the Lower East Side.

Mr. Silver, as I liked to tell people, had a similar background as my own. We are the same age. We both grew up on the Lower East Side and would never leave it. We both served our communities in the parallel years of our respective tenures, no matter the role. He was as much a devout Jew as I was a devout Italian-American Catholic. I mention this since I am convinced of his inherent fervent goodness and motivations guided by his faith, as I my own. But we all go astray and we are all in need of forgiveness and mercy. In that vein, I am reminded of Pope Francis's proclamation of the Year of Mercy. I implore the court to grant a lenient sentence on essentially a good man who did much for many. I think of his health and his age as good reasons to consider a lenient sentence, but also my thoughts for his family and grand-children. They really served our district by the hours, days, weeks and years they were deprived of a good father and grandfather by the work he gave over to the Assembly and his constituents.

Sincerely,



Victor J. Papa